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THE TEACHING OF JESUS
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FRANK HUGH FOSTER, PH. D., D. D.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS

CONCERNING

HIS OWN MISSION

By

Frank Hugh Foster, Ph. D., D. D.

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TO THE MEMORY OF
JOSEPH HENRY THAYER
GRAMMARIAN, LEXICOGRAPHER
AND TRANSLATOR
OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
PAINSTAKING TEACHER
ACCURATE AND LEARNED EXEGETE
KNIGHT
WITHOUT FEAR AND WITHOUT REPROACH
FAITHFUL FRIEND



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PREFACE

IT is the object of this book to present to the general public, without controversy and in a plain manner, the results of the best scholarship respecting its theme. Learned lumber of every kind has been rigorously excluded. Hence there are no references to books, and no minute discussions. But such discussions have not been unexamined by the writer; and at many a point the argument has taken silent notice of them. The style has been condensed as much as seemed consistent with intelligibility. The hope is that Sunday School classes and private readers may here easily find what they want, and be both stimulated to further study and helped religiously.

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CHAPTER I

The Method of the Study

THE advantages of the Christian student are sometimes his disadvantages. He lives in the Christian Church, which has been studying truth for two thousand years. All its great scholars and divines are his teachers and fathers. He is naturally inclined, when he wishes to know why Jesus Christ came into the world, to ask these teachers. He can scarcely go wrong, he thinks, if he takes the result of all the ages of Christian study for the true answer of his questions. The Church must

know, and the answer of her scholars is the answer of the Church.

Direct Knowledge Best

But this may not be wholly so. When one goes into a cathedral, the light that comes pouring through its windows is the light of the sun ; but it is variously colored and quite different from the white light outside. Every window has its beautiful pictures wrought in colored glass, and the light is modified in a different way by every bit through which it passes. If one wishes to know what the sunlight is in all its purity and brilliancy, he must go out of the cathedral and stand in the full white light of the sun itself. So every teacher in the Church, taking the truth from the revelation made by Jesus, has colored it more or less, as he has transmitted it through his own personality. Another will not get from him just what he received from Jesus. To know the pure truth of Jesus, it is, there-

fore, necessary to step outside of the Church, and stand in the full light which shines from the Sun of Righteousness himself. The Church gives us the knowledge that there is light, she points us to the Sun, she has many a word of helpful interpretation to give. These are advantages. But if they *take the place* of direct knowledge of Jesus for one's self, they become disadvantages. A more glorious understanding of the mission of Jesus in the world, of every truth he has had to reveal, and of every deed he has had to perform, will be gained if, for a time, not his disciples but *himself* be heard.

Jesus' Own Words

We must go, then, to the Gospels for our answer to the great question of this book: *Why did Jesus Christ come into the World?* There he tells us himself: there we stand in the full sunlight of truth. Some have gone even further, and have

said that we must restrict ourselves to his own recorded *words*. The disciples, and even the inspired Apostles, were men. They were "colored," and can transmit only colored light. If we want truly the pure sunlight, the light of unmodified truth, we must hear not even what the Apostles say about Jesus' teaching, but the exact words of Jesus *only*. This is his teaching uncolored by any transmitting agency whatever. This alone gives the exact truth.

If this further distinction is correct, and we may hope to obtain knowledge of Jesus' teachings from his own words exclusively, then certain things must be true about those words. They must be reported with a great degree of fulness and accuracy. We must be able to know, first, that they are Jesus' *exact words*, and, second, precisely what they mean, without the help of anything except comparison of one teaching with another. Enigmatical phrases, scattered hints on

great themes, brief and inadequate reports of long and profound discourses, will avail us little. If the Apostles correctly understood him, we must be able to justify them from his words alone: if they, perchance, misunderstood him, or only partially understood, that must be equally evident from the same words. Two things we must have, Fulness, and Precision.

Dependence on the Apostles

Now, evidently, neither of these things do we actually have. The reports, first, are not *full*, for in the fullest examples, as in the Sermon on the Mount, or in the Last Discourse, we may read in a few moments what must have taken a long time to deliver. We have in these cases little more than the heads of the discourse, and in most cases only a glimpse of the main substance of a discourse. The parables may be complete, each in itself; but there were many more parables.

Often we have mere hints, and isolated phrases to go on, as in that most important text for our present study, Matt. xx. 28, where the word "ransom" starts new questions rather than answers old. If the gospels contained *nothing but* Jesus' words, how brief, how inadequate as a report of the teachings of such a man the one hundred and twenty pages which they fill out in a quarto Bible! No, fullness is not to be found in the report of Jesus' words!

Neither is verbal precision. When we compare parallel passages in the different gospels, how many variations we find! Where is the *verbatim* report which the accurate student demands? Even John's reports are so evidently in the peculiar style determined by his own marked individuality,¹ that no stress can be laid upon their universal verbal pre-

¹ Compare the gospel and the Epistles, where he was not controlled by any purpose of reporting. The two styles are the same. Then compare the

cision, considered as reports. Even the professed words of Jesus are therefore colored by the writer's understanding and memory of them. In the gospels you are still in the cathedral and see the light through the medium of other men.

Jesus, the Jesus of the Gospels

We must, therefore, pause in our search for the true light at that light which shines from the pages of the entire four gospels as we now have them. The Jesus whom we know is the Jesus whom the evangelists portray. We cannot know him apart from their conception of him, for they have given not *him*, but their *conception* of him. If the two are different and contradictory, then we can never know Jesus. We must go back to the *words of Jesus*, if we are to gain the best knowledge of his mission into the world; but these are not his style of the first three gospels. It is markedly different.

words *in distinction from* their report in the gospels and the evangelists' understanding of them, but his words *as reported to us*. Efforts which separate between these things are foredoomed to failure in attaining the teaching of Jesus. They may gratify the ingenuity of men, but they can never commend themselves to any but those who make them. To success it is essential to assume, as this present study will frankly do, *the equal substantial value of all the evangelical representations of Jesus' teachings*, whether they be report, or comment, or application, or implication. And thus the whole text of all the gospels will be employed as the necessary and indispensable means of interpreting the reproduction found in them of the Saviour's words.

The Fourth Gospel

But is not an exception to be made in reference to the Fourth Gospel? Is not its individuality too marked to allow us

to take it as giving even a fairly objective and reliable view of Jesus' teaching? Is not the Jesus it presents distinctly different from that Jesus which we find on the pages of the first three gospels? And must not any discussion that pretends to have value distinguish between the two forms of doctrine, and give the preference to that of the simple and primitive three?

The point of view of the two styles of presenting Jesus is enough different to justify a separation in the treatment of every theme between its synoptic, or earlier form, and its Johannine. Advantage will often be found to flow from this separation. But when all is said, the picture given of Christ in the first three, and in the fourth gospel is substantially the same. They can be rendered inconsistent only by removing, by falsely so-called "critical" processes, elements from the three earlier gospels which are found there and belong where they are

found. If they be separated for argument's sake, the argument finally proves their agreement; and to assume that agreement is to find it constantly confirmed. The Christ of the four gospels is a single and consistent personality, and his teaching is better understood by considering them all than by divorcing them.

Environment

A further principle has an important application to this study. Everything pertaining to this world is known fully only as its environment is known. Animal, plant, a race, an institution, an idea, —none of these can be known by any process which isolates them. This is now accepted and employed as a principle in the study of almost every important theme. It will be found to have a direct, but possibly an unexpected application to our present subject.

The teachings of Jesus must be understood by a consideration of his environ-

ment, and by the environment of the records which have transmitted them to us. It seems scarcely worth remarking that he could be understood by the people only as he spoke their language. But their language was not a mere list of words. Words themselves mean this or that to the hearer according to the stock of ideas which he possesses, by which they are interpreted. What does the word "wealth" mean to the widow whose entire living is two mites, and what to the proud rulers of the Jews? What does "salvation" mean to the sinner who feels his unutterable guilt, and the Pharisee who has been taught from the beginning that he is a favorite of heaven and supposes that he has "kept all the commandments from his youth?" Hence what Jesus' hearers were, what they had been taught and believed, their history and institutions and theology and forms of common life, all entered into their preparation for his teaching and thus deter-

mined their understanding of it. And thus even his meaning was determined, for he would not, as a wise and sincere teacher, speak so as to be inevitably misunderstood, and he could gain no credit with us if he did. Thus the whole of current Judaism is to be taken into our view as we seek to determine what Jesus meant by this or that word. And many another element of environment there is also.

The Gospels have an Environment

This is often forgotten, but it exists, and by it the gospels must be interpreted.

If we compare the dates at which the different books of the New Testament were written, we discover that the gospels are not the earliest. This place belongs to the Epistles of Paul. The interval of time between epistle and gospel ranges in different cases between the extremes of fifteen and forty years. In the meantime the Epistles of Paul had been widely

circulated.² We do not know how widely, but we know that they went from Rome on the west to the heart of Asia Minor on the east, and from Philippi on the north to Colossae on the south, and that they circulated from church to church.³ It cannot be supposed that the evangelists were ignorant of their contents. They had already themselves learned much from Paul.⁴ They wrote for a Church which already had the epistles, and they knew that the gospel according to Paul would powerfully affect the understanding of their own gospel. Hence they must have written with an unconscious if not a conscious—better, with both conscious and often unconscious reference to him. They were in his environment, and he is essential to the understanding of them. Had they not agreed with him, they must

² Comp. 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16.

³ Col. iv. 16.

⁴ Gal. ii. 1–21.

have openly opposed him, as he did Peter while there was still matter of controversy between them.⁵ The fact that they do not oppose him argues powerfully for their conscious agreement with him. Continued study of both will confirm their agreement. We must therefore bring Paul in to interpret Matthew and John, as the early church did, and as the church has ever since done. We are thus but recognizing the principle that a form—a form of doctrine as well as anything else—is known by its environment.

Doctrinal Unity of the New Testament

We thus arrive, by a somewhat new path, at an old principle, upon which this book will be based, the unity of the New Testament. We cannot separate between a “theology of Jesus” and a “theology of Paul,” the former of which should teach, for example, free forgiveness without an atonement, the latter the ne-

⁵ Gal. ii. 11.

cessity of an atonement. At least, we cannot do this before examination. If we should find clear proof of such differences, we should have to accept them ; but to infer them from the fact that one is silent, or indefinite as to some doctrine which the other teaches—that would be to forget the principle of environment. When two explanations of passages can be given, one of which makes them agree and the other makes them differ, the former is to be preferred. Such is the supposition which is demanded by a general survey of the relations of gospels and epistles, and such the “working theory” upon which we shall proceed, till full acquaintance with the facts has either refuted the theory or confirmed it beyond the possibility of further reasonable questioning.

CHAPTER II

The Preparation

WHEN Jesus appeared, it was, as already said, in the environment of the Jewish nation. He was born a Jew. The nation of which he thus became a member had long cherished hopes of a Messiah who should fulfill the brilliant prophecies about him with which the Old Testament was crowded. They knew where he was to be born,¹ and that he was to be of the lineage of David. They knew he was to be a king;² but they misconceived the

¹ Matt. ii. 5.

² Matt. xxii. 42.

nature of his kingdom, fixing their eyes on deliverance from the yoke of Rome and the establishment of an earthly kingdom,³ and were thereby rendered unprepared for his spiritual doctrine. They even had vague ideas as to his eternity, as if he could not die.⁴ They had failed to get the meaning of the most significant passages of their ancient Bible, and had hence no true knowledge of him, or of his mission, and had to be instructed and corrected, again and again, at every vital point. Of a suffering Messiah, despite the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, they seem to have had no knowledge whatever. And thus their view of him only serves to teach us what he was *not*, except as it serves to render plainer some of his own expressions.

John the Baptist

There was one man in Israel who knew

³ Acts i. 6.

⁴ Jn. xii. 34.

what the others did not. This was John, the child born of prophecy and miracle, who was trained for his work in the desert, and came "preaching the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins."⁵ He shared the Messianic hopes of his people, but knew himself to stand in a special relation to the Messiah. He was the Voice sent to make ready for the coming of the expected one.⁶ As the Evangelist John expresses it, he was sent "for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him."⁷ And he knew the holy sign, the descending Spirit, by which the Messiah was both to be declared and empowered.⁸

John, too, recognized the kingship of the Messiah, and proclaimed the near ap-

⁵ Mk. i. 4.

⁶ Jn. i. 23. Comp. Matt. iii. 3; Mk. i. 3; Lk. i. 17.

⁷ Jn. i. 7. Comp. vs. 31.

⁸ Jn. i. 33.

proach of the kingdom.⁹ But his idea of the kingdom was a spiritual idea, for its founding was to be the chief work of that greater one who should come after him and should "baptize in the Spirit."¹⁰ This view at once shattered the hopes of earthly brilliancy which the Jews at large entertained for the kingdom of the Messiah. Such a spiritual mission, among a people sunk so low in vice as Israel was,¹¹ must be attended with judgment,¹² which should have eternal consequences. Thus the Messiah was elevated to the rank of a divine personage, for only God can pronounce eternal judgment. John's Messiah was, therefore, a King, and an eternal King, but he was more.

The Lamb of God

He was more ; for he was the suffering

⁹ Matt. iii. 2.

¹⁰ Matt. iii. 11.

¹¹ Lk. iii. 7, etc.

¹² Lk. iii. 17 ; Matt. iii. 12.

Redeemer. When Jesus came to be baptized of John in Jordan, he was pointed out by John to those who stood about as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."¹³

The meaning of this slight and brief reference to the work of Jesus might well be regarded as too uncertain to afford the basis for any doctrine of religion but for the place and circumstances in which it stands. These are its environment, and determine its meaning. That word "lamb" had as definite a reference to the ear of a Jew trained in the Scriptures, as "light" has to the student of the Apostle John. In one place in the Old Testament only is the sacrificial victim called a "lamb," and that is in the great chapter of Isaiah upon the Servant of Jehovah.¹⁴ Of him it is said that he was "as a lamb that is led to the slaughter." The Old Testament here reaches the

¹³ Jn. i. 29, 36.

¹⁴ Is. liii. 7.

summit of its doctrine of the Messiah. The way of the crown becomes here the way of the cross. It is with this picture that the Baptist identifies Jesus, and he thereby teaches that Jesus' work culminated in his sacrifice, by which he was "wounded for our transgressions," and Jehovah "laid on him the iniquity of us all."¹⁵ If to some, as generally it has to the Jews both ancient and modern, that prophecy has seemed to refer to the personified people of Israel, John understood it of an individual person, and that person was Jesus.

This distinct interpretation, given by his acknowledged forerunner,¹⁶ forms a large element of the environment of Jesus' teaching as to himself. He was thus introduced to his own disciples,¹⁷ and to the public who listened to the

¹⁵ Is. liii. 5, 6.

¹⁶ Matt. xi. 14.

¹⁷ Jn. i. 35, 36.

Baptist.¹⁸ As they reflected on John and his connection with Jesus, these remarkable words must have largely influenced their understanding of what Jesus said. And it is not strange that, years after, when John came to write his gospel, he put this text at the beginning, as a kind of motto for all the christological teaching of his story. And in *this* environment, it is his distinct purpose that Jesus' first recorded utterance as to himself,¹⁹ —“the Son of Man must be lifted up”—otherwise enigmatical, shall stand and find interpretation.

Saviour from Sin

There was still another element in the environment in which Jesus' teaching was set, a little group of men and women in the midst of the Jewish public who had all been the recipients of special rev-

¹⁸ Jn. i. 29.

¹⁹ Jn. iii. 14.

elation in regard to Jesus,—Joseph and Mary, Elizabeth and Zacchaeus, Simeon and Anna. To them Jesus was no mere child of ordinary birth, but “conceived by the Holy Ghost.”²⁰ His name was no ordinary name, given by caprice or prescribed by family tradition, but bestowed by an angel²¹ expressly to designate his mission as the Saviour of his people “from their sins.” They expected for him a most glorious career as King,²² but waited humbly for the revelation of fact as to its nature and course.²³ With many a misunderstanding of detail,²⁴ this little group looked confidently for salvation by the Son of divine mercy, and when John called him Lamb of God, that became the more definite expression

²⁰ Lk. i. 35.

²¹ Matt. i. 21.

²² Lk. ii. 34, 38.

²³ Lk. ii. 19.

²⁴ Matt. xii. 46.

of their hope.²⁵ The work of Jesus found its true meaning to them in *salvation*.

²⁵ This is implied in the use of Is. liii. made in Matt. viii. 17. This chapter had come to be currently applied to Jesus.

CHAPTER III

Summaries of His Mission by Jesus Himself

MOST men do not know what they are in the world for. They find their work with difficulty and pursue it with doubt. They are satisfied with having an occupation. It is only by an act of faith, of which few are capable, that their lives assume to them the character of a mission, and they feel that they are *sent* by God himself to do what they do do.

In this doubt and perplexity Jesus had no share. As a child of twelve he knew

what was "his Father's business."¹ In any deep-going discussion of his life, such words as these, which mark him out as above the ordinary consciousness and lot of men, must be placed at the beginning,—such words, repeated many times in various form, as these :

"I came forth and am come from God ; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me."²

He was, first of all, *sent*.

His Mission learned from his Deeds

We might employ either of two ways to discover what Jesus' mission was, for we might look at what he *did*, or at what he *said* about it himself. If we pursued the former course, we should follow the main events of his life as related in the gospels. We should find him an obscure youth in a provincial village, little unlike other youths, but still giving his mother

¹ Lk. ii. 49.

² Jn. viii. 42.

cause to "ponder things in her heart."³ At about the age of thirty years, he emerges from his obscurity, and engages in various labors. He becomes at once a *teacher*, whose subject matter is the truth about God and men. Patiently and unweariedly, in the midst of all sorts of obstacles and rebuffs, he continues to instruct a people that prove themselves slow of ears and still slower of heart. In his solitary chamber, sitting on Jacob's well, by the wayside, in the markets and synagogues, in private houses and in the Temple itself, he proclaims everywhere the gospel of the kingdom, and calls men to God.

But, as he teaches, he finds other work waiting for him. The ignorance and sin of men have called for instruction. But there are other needs of men. He finds them miserable, suffering, and in want. These needs appeal to him, for they spring from that great fundamental, spirit-

³ Lk. ii. 19.

ual need and illustrate it. He *heals* the sick, cleanses the lepers, casts out devils, feeds the multitudes, rescues his endangered disciples. One kind of work is as natural to him as the other. Both are called out by the immediate need. He assumes also the rôle of *Messiah*, whom the Jews had long expected. He comes to set up a kingdom, but it is a *kingdom of the truth*. Membership in it means the assumption of a new spiritual relation, for he refuses to be made king of the multitudes when they come to set up an earthly sovereignty. When men repent and exercise faith in him, he *pronounces forgiveness* of their sins. He creates in his followers a *new spiritual life*, which he designates as eternal. Thus his days pass in the humble but fundamental work of enlightening men's minds, doing them practical good, awakening their spiritual activities, and conferring on them spiritual gifts.

Gradually about this peaceful work and

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over the scene of so much goodness and helpfulness there spreads a dark shadow. To do good to the suffering is often to oppose and transgress the legal observances of a formal Judaism. Hatred begins to rise against him as a reformer and a revolutionist. Jesus begins to speak of a violent death as the end of his career. But he moves composedly on, makes no change in his methods, comes at last to the fatal hour, delivers himself into the hands of the awestruck mob who have come out against him but cannot execute their purpose, and on the cross surrenders his life by his own act. And then he emerges from the tomb to commission his disciples for a world wide work, and to ascend to heaven. He has added *death* and *resurrection* to the rest. In these main things is comprised what he *did*.

Jesus' Mission expressed by Himself

But Jesus has himself told us what his mission in the world was. He has not

expressed it in a single verse of the New Testament, but at several different times, under different circumstances, he told why he had come. None of these expressions is a complete expression of his full mission; but, taken together, the principal of them contain all that he said, and, we may presume, all there was to say. Seven of them may be selected, as embracing all the rest and briefly containing all his teaching as to his work. They follow here, without explanation, in the order of their logical relations. The remainder of this volume will be taken up with their careful discussion in order. They are these :

1. "*The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.*" *Lk. xix. 10.*

2. "*The works which the Father hath given me to accomplish.*" *Jn. v. 36.*

3. "*I am come a light into the World, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness.*" *Jn. xii. 46.*

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4. *"I am come to call sinners to repentance."* *"Lk. v. 32.*

5. *"I came that they may have life."*
Jn. x. 10.

6. *"The Son of Man came to minister and to give his life a ransom for many."* *Matt. xx. 28.*

7. *"For judgment came I into this World."*
Jn. ix. 39.

Let us now study these expressions, one after another.

CHAPTER IV

The Lost World and the Kingdom of Heaven

“The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.” Lk. xix. 10.

THIS saying of Jesus was uttered on a special occasion and in reference to a single man, lost to the commonwealth of Israel as well as to God, Zacchaeus. But here, as in so many cases, the individual case led to the utterance of the larger underlying truth. He expressed here what the world was—lost; and hence what he came for,—to seek and save the lost. Here is a whole theory

of the world, and a whole theory of salvation involved.

Lost! What this word meant to a Jew will be understood when we think of the source from which it is taken. The New Testament is full of the language of the Old, and its thought vibrates with the thought of the Old. The word "lost" is one example of this among many others. Jehovah was the "shepherd"¹ of Israel, who "restored the soul." And Jesus was the "good shepherd."² He looked upon the people to whom he came as a shepherd would, and he found them straying from the fold, "lost sheep of the house of Israel."³ In the tenderness of his loving heart, his first and predominant feeling was that of pity. He had "compassion for them because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having

¹ Ps. xxiii. 1.

² Jn. x. 11.

³ Matt. x. 6.

a shepherd.”⁴ This note of tender regret over sin never dies completely away in the New Testament. Sin is itself generally designated by a word⁵ which originally means a “missing of the mark.” In the text set at the head of this chapter, it was because Zacchaeus had separated himself from his people and gone into the ways of the Gentiles, whose business he was doing as a Roman tax gatherer, that he was called “lost.” Astray, lost from the way of safety and protection, deprived of pasture and in danger of wild beasts, ignorant, foolish, silly,—the lost sheep was sought by the shepherd with painful solicitude till it was found.⁶ Like such sheep, men are “lost.”

But this was not all the meaning of the word. Sin was found everywhere, and it was no mere negative failure to find and do the good. It was a positive hos-

⁴ Matt. ix. 36. Comp. Ezek. xxxiv. 5.

⁵ ἁμαρτία.

⁶ Ps. xxiii. 3. Lk. xv. 4.

tility to the known good. Sin takes on a deeper meaning as the gospels describe sinners. The "heart"⁷ is wrong. The world is filled with violence and evil. Men obey their own lusts and forget the law of God. They even distort and pervert the law itself.⁸ Where special sanctity might be expected, among the chosen leaders of the people, there wickedness reaches its height.⁹ Compassion yields to righteous anger when the Scribes and Pharisees are mentioned, men who had opportunity to know their duty and to do it, but who chose the evil. But anger yields to compassion when the young man comes asking what he shall do to inherit eternal life, and in frank simplicity declares that he has kept the commandments from his youth. "Looking upon him" in his young eagerness for something greater

⁷ Mk. vii. 21.

⁸ Matt. xv. 6.

⁹ Matt. chap. xxiii.

and purer than he had, Jesus "loved him."¹⁰ But he put the probing test, "Go, sell whatsoever thou hast;" and he closed that story when he said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" The young man "saw and approved the better, but followed the worse." He "missed," but he did not want now to avoid the missing. He was "lost" in a deeper sense than that.

These are the forms in which the first three gospels present the matter after their practical and concrete fashion. But the picture of the world which we find when we pass to the more reflective and philosophical fourth gospel, is not essentially different. The "world" is now viewed in the mass. It has a like character and destiny. God loves it, and gives his Son that it may not perish but have life—be saved—through him.¹¹

¹⁰ Mk. x. 21.

¹¹ Jn. iii. 16.

The world is "lost," therefore, because it is not "saved." "Men love darkness rather than light because their works are evil;"¹² and they are already in a state of judgment (condemnation),¹³ out of which they can come, if they will believe, but in which remaining, as they will do if they do not exercise themselves to escape, they have the "wrath of God abiding on them."¹⁴ Darkness, sin, judgment, death—the most terrible words in the Bible—these are the words which describe the world as it is before Jesus brings his salvation into it. And more! This world is under a Prince of its own,¹⁵ against whom Jesus was set in opposition,¹⁶ and whom he "judged,"¹⁷ who was the "Father" of the wicked Jews, and was

¹² Jn. iii. 19.

¹³ Jn. iii. 18.

¹⁴ Jn. iii. 36.

¹⁵ Jn. xii. 31.

¹⁶ Jn. xiv. 30.

¹⁷ Jn. xii. 31.

the Devil.¹⁸ Thus it is in itself a kingdom of evil organized against the kingdom of God, fortified and established in itself. The apostle who wrote the gospel, expressing in his own language the thought he had derived from his Master, said, "The whole world *lieth in* the evil one" [A. V. "in wickedness."] ¹⁹ It was not strange that *such* a world "received him not." ²⁰

Thus the world is now estranged from God and dominated by evil. Now! But it has a future to which the word "lost" is also applied. In comparison with the fate of lost men in the world to come, the evils of this world were nothing. Men were not to be "afraid of them that kill the body," but it was wisdom to "fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." ²¹ This is

¹⁸ Jn. viii. 41, 44.

¹⁹ 1 Jn. v. 19.

²⁰ Jn. i. 11.

²¹ Matt. x. 28.

the place of "fire prepared for the devil and his angels,"²² an "eternal fire,"²³ "unquenchable,"²⁴ and "where their worm dieth not,"²⁵ and anguish is their lot.²⁶ As the Fourth Gospel prefers to phrase it, it is the realm of "death,"²⁷ in which a man is till he believes in God, and in which he remains, if he fails to exercise this faith.²⁸ "Eternal life" is the knowledge of God,²⁹ and eternal death is that state of final estrangement from God which is the highest misery of the soul, for which any expressions of pain and loss are but the feeble suggestions of what is, after all, beyond human conception.

²² Matt. xxv. 41.

²³ Comp. Matt. xviii. 8.

²⁴ Mk. ix. 43, 48.

²⁵ *Ibid.* vs. 48.

²⁶ Matt. viii. 12.

²⁷ Jn. v. 24.

²⁸ Comp. I Jn. iii. 14.

²⁹ Jn. xvii. 3.

The modern church tends to emphasize the present life and to neglect the future. The mediæval magnified the future and despised the present. But Jesus, while placing the eternal life above the fleeting period of human existence, and the spiritual interests far above the material, never failed to insist on the unity of both lives and the importance of daily doing our duty in our present estate. "Life," whether now or bye-and-bye, the knowledge and the love of God, is the great thing; and, once gained, it is eternal in consequence of its essential nature.

This lost world—lost now and lost forever—constituted the object of Jesus' coming. He came to save it.³⁰ He came preaching the "kingdom of heaven"³¹ as John had before him; and what he sought to do was to put the one in the place of the other,—to make the

³⁰ Jn. iii. 17.

³¹ Matt. iv. 17

lost world into a saved world, to replace the kingdom of the "Prince of the Power of the Air" ³² by the kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of Heaven

Jesus came, therefore, preaching the near approach ³³ of the kingdom of heaven. It was no new term to Jewish ears. The Old Testament is full of the idea that God is King. The ancient government of Israel before the days of Saul, the first human king, had been a government which professed to be nothing but the means by which the authority of God was exercised. ³⁴ When the ideal should be restored, the ancient kingdom of God would be set up again, and its king would be the Anointed One, the Messiah, whom God would "set upon his holy hill of Zion." ³⁵ Jesus never professes to

³² Eph. ii. 2. Comp. 2 Cor. iv. 4.

³³ Matt. iv. 17.

³⁴ 1 Sam. viii. 7.

³⁵ Ps. ii. 6

improve on the Old Testament ideal of this kingdom. He did not share the misunderstandings common among the people. He was thus led to teach various things about the kingdom by way of correcting them at different points. But this kingdom was always the ancient idea of the prophets, cleared of the errors of later ages. When he proclaimed it, this was itself a claim to be the expected Messiah, and it was so understood.³⁶ In fact, the only new thing about Jesus' preaching of the kingdom was the announcement that it was "at hand."

It will be of advantage, however, to trace the idea of the kingdom in Jesus' own words, independently of all its connection with the prophecies and intimations of the past.

Its name points out its character and object. It is the kingdom "of heaven" because it speaks of heaven, would make earth a heaven, and brings the divine, the

³⁶ Acts i. 6.

heavenly forces down into this world to save it. It would produce such a state of things that the will of God may be "done in earth as it is in heaven."³⁷ Again, it is the kingdom "of God"³⁸ because he creates it by the sending of his Son.³⁹ Christ is its king.⁴⁰ It has no outward pomp and circumstance,⁴¹ since it is not "of this world."⁴² Its members are distinguished by the possession of a certain spirit, which manifests itself in forms greatly unlike those assumed by the world, humility, meekness, mercy, purity,—which do not fit in with the order of things in this world very well, and lead to "persecution," which, however, is a source of blessing!⁴³ In this present

³⁷ Matt. vi. 10.

³⁸ e. g. in Jn. iii. 3.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 13, 17.

⁴⁰ Matt. xxvii. 11.

⁴¹ Jn. xviii. 37; Lk. xvii. 20.

⁴² Jn. xviii. 36.

⁴³ Matt. v. 3-12. Cf. Lk. xviii. 17.

age of the world the kingdom is only "coming," for it is here only imperfectly realized,⁴⁴ and its king is to depart into "another country ;"⁴⁵ but he will come again, and then the kingdom shall be established in its glory.⁴⁶ Then shall be introduced the perfect reign of love.

To save the lost world, then, Jesus began the work of introducing the kingdom of God. He gathered about himself a little group of men to whom he taught constantly these principles of the kingdom. They were the "disciples," or the "twelve." They received his message very slowly and with many misunderstandings. They clung to the common Jewish idea of an external kingdom to the very hour of the ascension. But they were, nevertheless, in some measure the embodied kingdom. They surrendered themselves wholly to the service

⁴⁴ Matt. xiii. 24 ff.

⁴⁵ Matt. xxv. 14.

⁴⁶ Matt. xxv. 31 ff.

of God by following his messenger. The spirit of divine love, of meekness, of loyalty, and of peace came upon them. When they were thus called out of the sinful world, the work of saving the world was already begun. Some had been saved. In this fact was the promise of the salvation of "many." And when his teaching was fully completed, when they had seen him die, rise again, and ascend to the Father, when the facts upon which their faith was founded and was to be engaged were all before them, and the Holy Spirit, the interpreter of truth, could now explain to them the meaning of all, then they began to present in a fuller and a more winning manner, by actual exemplification, what the Kingdom was. But meantime there was elsewhere an exemplification.

Christ Himself the Kingdom

One aspect of this kingdom is little dwelt upon in the New Testament, but

it is no less important for that. It is presented to us by the simple facts, narrated in the gospels but not explained or enlarged upon. Jesus did not come to lay the first foundation of the kingdom. That had been done when Abraham was called out of Haran. He came to establish it in a larger and more perfect way, to introduce those new forces which were to give it a greater universality and perfection, and to furnish it in his own person with a perfect exemplification of what it was to be. What was a life dominated by perfect love, and flowing on in perfect communion with God? The life of Jesus answered the question. He was fully a member of the kingdom in its purest form and under its loftiest ideal. He illustrated it. *He was for a time the whole existing kingdom*, both king and subjects, standard of its life and sole embodiment of that standard. *This was the first great department of his works as Saviour.* He came to save this lost world. He

did it in the first instance by himself coming as a man, as one man who was already in the kingdom of heaven, already exercising perfect love and having perfect fellowship ⁴⁷ with the Father, as the pattern of what all saved men were to be, the pledge and earnest of the coming salvation for all the rest. We do not need to resort to mysticism and mere figure to say that the world with Jesus in it was a saved world. It was saved because salvation had *begun* in it; because in one person it was already fully *realized*; because the *powers* of salvation were already *at work* in it, and men were already being drawn into the kingdom of heaven. Jesus *preached* the kingdom. More, he *was* the kingdom.

⁴⁷ Jn. x. 30.

CHAPTER V

The Salvation of Healing

“The Father hath given me works to accomplish.”
Jn. v. 36.

THE prominence of Jesus' works of healing in the gospel story was forcibly brought to our attention in the review of his “deeds” which was taken in Chapter III. It is the more remarkable that he says so little about them as he does himself. In the Gospel of John, as we shall see, they are often spoken of, but in one accessory aspect only, for the most part. In the other three gospels, they are generally

left to tell their own story. The evangelists, when speaking in their own persons, are less reticent. Matthew reckons them among the essential labors which Jesus came to perform, and applies to them a portion of Isaiah's great chapter, "Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases."¹ By implication, at least, Jesus made them a distinct part of his official work, when at Nazareth he applied to himself that other great passage from Isaiah, "He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."² This prevailing silence he broke, however, in the discourse occasioned by the miracle of healing at Bethesda, after having joined this work of his with the eternal work of God,—“My Father worketh even until now, and I work.”³ He appealed to

¹ Matt. viii. 17.

² Lk. iv. 18.

³ Jn. v. 17.

this and like works as the great witness which he had, greater than that of John who was the commissioned witness come from God.⁴ He does *not* say, however, that the works were *given* him as a witness. Being given, they serve as witness. But they were “given him to *accomplish*,” evidently because worthy of doing in themselves, “given” him, and hence an essential element in his mission.

The Motive of the Miracles

This is nowhere expressly declared in the New Testament; but it is, after all, not difficult to find it. Follow Jesus about any day, as he goes up and down the land, see him by the sea, in the streets of the villages, journeying from town to town, coming into the synagogues and into the temples, and a sympathetic eye has no difficulty in discovering why he did what he did. His “beginning of

⁴ Jn. i. 6.

miracles," done at Cana, was performed at a wedding. A needful provision for the harmless festivity had failed, and friendly kindness led to its supply by him who had the power.⁵ And then Jesus "went about in all Galilee,"⁶ "teaching," "preaching the good tidings of the kingdom," and "*healing*." The kingdom and healing naturally went together. That kingdom was to be the place where there should be no sin. How could sickness and suffering maintain their reign in such a kingdom? And how could one who came to banish the evil, greater in reality though often thought the less, fail to relieve that which was the less, when it seemed to men's feeble moral apprehension so much greater? He healed the leper who came falling down before him,⁷ because it was *natural*, infinitely natural to such a one, to

⁵ Jn. chap. ii.

⁶ Matt. iv. 23.

⁷ Matt. viii. 2.

answer the piteous supplication of a wasting and dying man. When the multitude thronged him,⁸ as they continually did, what else could he do, in the midst of this misery, accumulated and heaped up, but heal, if indeed he had compassionate love for men? If he had not had the *love*, he could not have been the Messiah. If he loved, he must *heal*. And, on the other hand, no one but the Messiah could manifest the full mastery over all misery which he exercised.⁹

We thus get the impression that the miracles are the natural outflow of Jesus' goodness, and a fulfilling of a part of his mission. The impression receives confirmation from every examination of the records. Sometimes his compassion is expressly referred to as the reason for the miracle. Examples of this are the story of the first feeding of the multi-

⁸ Matt. iv. 24; Lk. viii. 42

⁹ Matt. xi. 4-6.

tude,¹⁰ and of the second also ;¹¹ and the striking account when, in his going about Galilee, "he saw the multitudes" and "was moved with compassion for them, *because they were distressed.*"¹² But where no mention is made of our Lord's compassion, the circumstances of the case often make it evident. The details of the accounts, emphasizing, as they do, the misery and earnestness of the sufferers, convey the idea. The centurion come in behalf of his son "beseeches" Jesus.¹³ On the Sea of Galilee, it is the danger of perishing and the frightened cry of the disciples that move him to still the waters.¹⁴ The pictures given of the "possessed," their misery, senselessness, and physical sufferings,¹⁵ show what the

¹⁰ Matt. xiv. 14 ff.

¹¹ Matt. xv. 32.

¹² Matt. ix. 36 ff.

¹³ Matt. viii. 5.

¹⁴ Matt. viii. 24, 25.

¹⁵ Matt. viii. 29. Comp. Mk. v. 15.

things were which the bearing of Jesus, his glance, the expression of his face, the tones of his voice, impressed on his disciples as producing the greatest effect on his sensitive heart. The pathetic cries of the blind,¹⁶ the fatherly anguish of Jairus,¹⁷ the brief vision of the boat distressed in the midst of the sea, all tell the same story. And when we turn to the Gospel of John, we find the same things, the same eagerness on the part of the nobleman for his son,¹⁸ the same compassion for the "great" hungry multitude,¹⁹ the same simplicity²⁰ of address and act, the same overflowing human sympathy.²¹

It is true, there is another element in John. Our text goes on: "The very

¹⁶ Matt. ix. 27. Comp. xx. 31 ff. Mk. x. 47-9.

¹⁷ "My *little* daughter," Mk. v. 23.

¹⁸ Jn. iv. 46-49.

¹⁹ Jn. vi. 5.

²⁰ Jn. v. 5, 6. Comp. vi. 20.

²¹ Lazarus' grave, Jn. xi. 33, 35.

works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.”²² Though the works were “given to accomplish,” they did serve, being given, for a sign. This use, made of them throughout the gospel, accords with its confessed purpose, which was “that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”²³ Miracles have a proving value. They are generally called “signs.” They “manifest Christ’s glory.” They are to be believed when words are disbelieved, because they are outward, tangible, and undeniable.²⁴ But this all belongs to the writer of the Gospel in his character as a preacher. What he preaches is true: the miracles were signs. But what he records in his character as an historian is also true, the simplicity with which Jesus responded, out of the fulness of his divine power, to the evident need of

²² Jn. v. 36.

²³ Jn. xx. 31.

²⁴ Jn. x. 38.

wretched men. Coming to do good, he did this first, most evident, and most eagerly demanded good, as an essential element of his work.

Relation of Healing to the Rest of Jesus' Work

On such a foundation Jesus built the rest of his work. The foundation of a building is often of a humble sort, composed of shapeless stones laid deep in the earth, and buried out of sight. It may seem a small thing to some that the Son of God should heal the sick, give sight to the blind, cast out devils. To some it may seem to be against "law." But it was Mary Magdalene, out of whom seven devils had been cast, who stood at his cross and came Sunday morning to his tomb with her last gifts; and it was the blind man who had been healed, who "believed" when Jesus revealed himself to him. In that moral approach to men by which they learned to "like the friend

before they loved the Saviour," the healings formed an essential portion.

A Permanent Portion?

Miracles of healing were for a time performed in the church after Jesus had ascended. Jesus had commissioned his first messengers chosen from his disciples to "heal the sick,"²⁵ and the Acts is full of accounts of such healings. In a sense that activity of Jesus remains in the church to-day. The miracles have ceased. But Jesus still produces moral changes in men by his varied ministry, direct and personal, or through his ministering disciples; and wherever that saving moral change is wrought, a new impulse of health is given even to the body.²⁶ Drunkards have lost their appetite for liquor; every disease arising from despondency, or other morbid mental condition, has received a powerful check

²⁵ Matt. x. 8.

²⁶ Ro. viii. 11.

at conversion ; and thus purity of heart has given, on a very large scale, health to men. The coming of Jesus to men still means the healing of their bodies from many an ill.

CHAPTER VI

The Salvation of Knowledge

“I am come a Light into the World, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness.”
Jn. xii. 46.

THIS text is often thought to mean that Jesus' mission in the world was to “enlighten” men, or to give them knowledge. Does not the very word “light” indicate this at once? Then, when we turn to consider what he *did*, and find him spending his time in teaching men, accepting the title of teacher, and, indeed, seeming to make this his chief business, the impression is

strengthened. Knowledge would seem to be relied on as the saving element. Again, other words are used which indicate the same thing, as when the "darkness," that is, the sinful world, is said not to "apprehend" ¹ the light, that is, not receive it. Light is used for "life," ² and life itself is defined ³ as knowledge. And hence some have gone so far as to summarize Jesus' whole mission under the word Teacher.

What is "Knowledge?"

But we must take ground here cautiously and deliberately. If light is made correlative with "knowledge," and is explained by it, it will become necessary to know what "knowledge" itself means. One can scarcely say that John spoke a technical language, for he is no philosophical scholar, but "speaks right on"

¹ A. V., "comprehend."

² Jn. i. 4.

³ Jn. xvii. 3.

as thoughts come to him, and in a popular way. But it is, nevertheless, true that his language is peculiar, that his figures and terms have a meaning of their own, and that this meaning is to be learned from the indications found in his own writings, and not by any philosophy, ancient or modern. Jesus was a teacher. What did he teach? And what, when he speaks of himself as a "Light," did he mean? We begin our answer by considering that text which we have selected as the most distinct and comprehensive, and have therefore placed at the head of this chapter.

"I am come a Light into the World," says Jesus, "that whosoever *believeth* on me may not *abide* in the darkness." Light leads to believing. One may "hear and not keep." He then "*remains* in darkness." Light, then, is more than teaching; it is *teaching that is received*. If not received, it *does not enlighten* any man. It is, for him, not even light.

This is a somewhat paradoxical result. But look at the parallel passages. In Jn. i. 4 and 5, light is defined as "life." Light shined in the darkness; but what *was* this light? Life. Now "life" in John has a very distinct and clear meaning. It is that state of moral union with God, produced by "faith," and expressing itself in conscious fellowship with him, which is essentially eternal in its nature, and is therefore to last forever. When light comes, *this* comes. When it is "apprehended"⁴ or "received"⁵ there comes from it a "right," viz., the right to become, take place and make claim as, the children of God, and this because such have already been "born" of God. The coming of the light is, therefore, the working of a change in men which is elsewhere ascribed to the Holy Spirit.⁶ The coming of the light is the coming

⁴ Vs. 5.

⁵ Vs. 12.

⁶ Jn. iii. 5.

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of a divine influence, proceeding from and exercised by Jesus, which transforms the man and makes him a child of God. If "teaching," then it is a *dynamic teaching*.

"Light" is thus used in various senses in the Gospel of John. It is that which brings salvation. Then, by a sudden change of application, it is no longer the means used to develop "life," but it is that life itself. Thus it is the same as "salvation," the rescue from sin and its corruption. It is the opposite of *sin*. And it is again used as the opposite of the condition of the lost. It denotes the ethical quality of the new life as holiness,⁷ but is chiefly used to describe it as salvation from "darkness."

The Teachings of Jesus

This dynamic teaching of Jesus addresses the intellect in some of its aspects. Hence Jesus may be said to have come

⁷ Comp. 1 Jn. i. 5 and 7.

to give knowledge in the more ordinary senses of that word. He taught, for example, that "God is a Spirit,"⁸—which conveys doctrinal knowledge, and states a truth not previously reached by any religious teacher. Yet even this truth was not taught for the mere gratification of the intellect. Jesus adds immediately: "And they that worship him must worship him in spirit." Intellectual *aspects* his teachings have: in fact he may be said to have stirred the human intellect more than any or all other teachers. But intellectual *purposes* give way to the moral. He teaches that he may save.

With this thought clearly in mind, we may note several distinct heads under which the teaching of Jesus, as the Light, falls.

1. The doctrine of God. "He that beholdeth me, beholdeth him that sent me,"⁹ he says; and, "He that hath seen

⁸ Jn. iv. 24.

⁹ Jn. xii. 45.

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me, hath seen the Father.”¹⁰ He reveals God by being himself. Now, this revelation of God comes from Jesus only. Not only is it a fact that the intellectual conception of God which has sprung from Jesus’ teachings was never known before, nor, independently of him, since ; but no one ever presented God in human form as Jesus did.¹¹ “No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son . . . hath declared him.”¹²

We thus see at once the difference between the teaching of Jesus and that of the prophets, who could only tell men *about* God, but never bring home to the vision and the heart the *being* of God. We see, too, the difference between the teaching of Jesus and of the church theologians (Augustine, Calvin, etc.), who have added to the prophet’s office the task of forming a “doctrine” of

¹⁰ Jn. xiv. 9.

¹¹ Comp. 2 Cor. iv. 6.

¹² Jn. i. 18.

God, viz., a statement in logical form of his attributes, and a proof of his existence. Jesus brings men into *direct contact* with God, because they gain direct contact with himself. They can refuse the contact and turn away ; but, if they remain, they continue to be with God, and thus they *know* him.

This knowledge, one springing from direct communion with God, and this only, is the knowledge which the teaching of Jesus is designed to produce. Any other knowledge, such, for example, as the theologian draws from Jesus' utterances, is incidental and auxiliary. The "salvation of knowledge " is the salvation of personal communion with God.

2. The doctrine of holiness. " Light " sometimes means holiness, as has already been explained. The coming of the Light was the coming of One " full of grace and truth." ¹³ He became the revelation of holiness by *being what he*

¹³ Jn. i. 14.

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was, holy and pure.¹⁴ At this point, however, his teaching was also largely in the realm of what our theologians call doctrine. He explains the ancient Law,—of murder, of adultery, of oath-taking, of vengeance, of love,¹⁵—and carries its prohibitions down from mere outward acts to the very thoughts of the heart. He enlarges on the duties of men in practical life,—on prayer, and fasting, and the use of money, and charitable judgment.¹⁶ He even interprets anew, and against the letter of the ancient law, certain things, as, for example, the law of divorce.¹⁷ All this may be called the system of duties, ethics, or a moral philosophy. But he who *heard* must *do*; otherwise the end of the teaching was not gained.¹⁸

¹⁴ Comp. I Jn. iii. 3.

¹⁵ See Matt. v. 21–48. Comp. xxii. 37–40.

¹⁶ Comp. Matt. chaps. vi. and vii.

¹⁷ Matt. v. 32.

¹⁸ Matt. vii. 26, 27.

3. The doctrine of sin (comp. chapter IV).

4. The doctrine that he himself is Saviour. That doctrine is contained by implication in many of his words, such as those we are here successively considering, but not by implication alone. It was made repeatedly the object of express declaration, as we need not take time here to elaborate.¹⁹ It is, therefore, *not Jesus' doctrine that saves, but he himself*. Salvation is personal contact with a saving person. Were this contact simply that personal contact which secures likemindedness in those between whom the contact is formed, it would be indistinguishable from the influence of Jesus' doctrine; for this is designed to produce a knowledge of the truth and likemindedness with God. But Jesus constantly represents himself as *doing* something for

¹⁹ e. g., Matt. v. 17, "I came," etc.; ix. 6, "Son of Man;" xi. 28; Jn. iii. 14-17, etc., etc., etc.

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our salvation, such as being "lifted up;" and he makes faith a trustful surrender to *him*,—a distinct person,—not merely to truth which is abstract and impersonal. Here then, we find the anticipation of what is to follow in the development of Jesus' mission, for the question must arise why he, as a person, should have this importance. Not alone, evidently, because in seeing him man sees God; for in these distant centuries we see him no more; but because he *is* something, and *does* something not contained in his own teachings, or in the teachings of others about him.

The meaning of Jesus in describing himself as the "Light," may possibly be better conveyed to this time by the answer of a question often agitated in past periods of the church's life, but daily presented in one form or another in this period. Is a man saved by his orthodoxy? Is another man lost because of his heterodoxy? The reply cannot be

doubtful. Not "knowledge," but knowledge accepted and obeyed, is the way of salvation. And, conversely, not ignorance, but wilful ignorance, which rejects the truth, "cometh not to the light lest its works should be reprov'd,"²⁰—this condemns. Not a given amount of knowledge, but "faith," holy attitude of heart even if coupled with few advantages for intellectual acquaintance with truth, saves.²¹ Even the attitude towards Jesus may be an unconscious one, but it is salvation if it be the right attitude.²² We have, thus, the same emphasis laid by Jesus on the inner ethical relations, on the will in distinction from the mere intellect, as led Paul to mention the heathen as sometimes "doing by nature the things of the law," "being the law unto themselves,"²³ for Jesus says: "If

²⁰ Jn. iii. 20.

²¹ Matt. viii. 10-12.

²² Matt. xxv. 37-40.

²³ Ro. ii. 14.

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any man *willeth* to do His will, he shall *know* ;”²⁴ and again : “ If ye *abide* in my word . . . ye shall *know* the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”²⁵

Salvation does not exclude the matter of knowledge, and perfected salvation involves much knowledge ; but *salvation* is essentially a matter of “ *light*,” of the reception of what knowledge a man may have.

²⁴ Jn. vii. 17.

²⁵ Jn. viii. 31, 32.

CHAPTER VII

The Salvation of Repentance and a New Life

“I am come to call sinners to repentance.” Lk.
v. 32.

“I came that they may have life.” Jn. x. 10.

JOHAN expresses the object of Jesus’ coming by the word “light.” This is the salvation of knowledge. It designates the internal, the state of the heart and mind, and brings us into spheres where saints have spoken of “beatific visions.” It is among the high things of Christian doctrine. And it is almost peculiar to the Fourth Gospel.

The other gospels are of a simpler and more matter-of-fact character. They have their simpler ways of expressing Jesus' message to men. We are to consider one of them under the present head. There are differences which strike us at once, which may seem to create a dissonance between John and the Three. Possibly a harmony of meaning may ultimately be found, and if so, the supposition of the unity of New Testament teaching, with which we started out, will receive an important confirmation.

John Baptist's Preaching

John "came preaching, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."¹ The word "repent" which he used, meant a "change of mind," a fundamental reversal of purposes and modes of thought, but especially a corresponding change of life. His preaching justified

¹ Matt. iii. 1, 2.

his employment of such a word. The reports of his sermons which have come down to us are very brief, but there is enough to indicate their substance. He was sharp in his denunciation of sin,² and clear in his assertion of the peril attending it.³ No racial advantages would be enough to secure a man's salvation,⁴ but "fruits" worthy of repentance must be produced, and these were charity, justice, mildness, truth, and contentedness. His preaching was, therefore, faithful and radical, demanding that thorough change of heart and deeds which alone can make saints out of sinners.

Jesus' Preaching

Jesus began his ministry with the same preaching, expressed in the same words.⁵

² "Offspring of vipers," Lk. iii. 7.

³ "Cast into the fire," *ib.* 9.

⁴ *Ibid.* 8.

⁵ Matt. iv. 17.

The meaning also was the same ; and the full development of his idea, which gradually appeared in direct exposition, in illustration, by implication in other things, leaves one impressed with the radical nature and far-reaching effects of the "change of mind" which repentance is. With both John and his Master, repentance was "unto remission of sins."⁶ The condition of forgiveness was sometimes given as "faith" ;⁷ but turning *away from sin* (repentance) and turning *towards God* (faith) are the same, undivided act of the soul. He who does the one, must, therefore, do the other. It makes no difference under which of the two names the act falls ; it is still the same. Repentance is said to save from "perishing"⁸ and to produce "joy in heaven."⁹ And its expression in the new

⁶ Mk. i. 4.

⁷ e. g. incidentally, Matt. ix. 2.

⁸ Lk. xiii. 3, 5.

⁹ Lk. xv. 7, 10.

life of the follower of Jesus was the theme of most of his discourses.

Repentance and the resulting new life were, thus, salvation, the coming of the kingdom within ¹⁰ the repentant soul, or, to change the figure, his entrance into that kingdom. Or, to put it in another way, the new life may be said to consist of three things, *a new heart, a new view of God and the world, and a new way of acting*, new good deeds done.

It was towards the production of such a new life that Jesus directed his preaching, and in this he performed a portion of his mission as Saviour. He "saved" men when he actually brought them out of sin into the fellowship of God, for a man who has this fellowship *is* saved. To effect this, he preached a holy life, and most of his discourses, such as the Sermon on the Mount in particular, were occupied in setting forth in the most con-

¹⁰ Lk. vii. 21.

crete way what a good life is. In that sermon, the holy virtues of the heart are placed first,—poverty of spirit, meekness, mercy, purity, peacefulness, righteousness, etc.,¹¹ but control of self by abstinence from anger¹² and by purity of both act and thought,¹³ charity¹⁴ and love,¹⁵ and all the virtues that are born of simplicity, piety, trust, and obedience, follow and complete the list. The new life was to be the old life transformed by an inward new spirit, lived in the same world, but by utterly different and new methods.

In the Gospel of John we have these fundamental thoughts presented after a new fashion, but without essential difference. We are here taught that a man must be “born anew”¹⁶ to enter the king-

¹¹ Matt. v. 3–12.

¹² *Ibid.* vs. 22.

¹³ Vs. 28.

¹⁴ Vs. 40.

¹⁵ Vs. 44, extending even to one's enemies.

¹⁶ Jn. iii. 2.

dom of God, and this by the "Spirit."¹⁷ Thus repentance appears for the first time as a divinely wrought change in a man, as radical as is the entrance on his original life by birth. It may seem that all this is utterly unlike that active change, the exertion of a man's powers in forming a new purpose and beginning a new life, of which the other gospels are full. But the passive change of "birth" is nothing if it does not eventually lead to "believing,"¹⁸ and believing is an act of the soul as truly as repentance, in fact is the same act, as has already been shown. It is the act by which a man "passes out of death into life."¹⁹ And this "life" is "eternal life," or, heaven already begun on earth.²⁰ As a life depending, as all life does, on due nourish-

¹⁷ Jn. i. 13; iii. 5.

¹⁸ Jn. iii. 15.

¹⁹ Jn. v. 24.

²⁰ See chap. VI.

ment, its food is the "bread of life"²¹ which Jesus comes to give, and which is himself.

The "new birth" is the work of God through his Spirit. It is mysterious²² but not altogether inexplicable in its nature. The Spirit is to "convince" the world of sin,²³ and conviction depends on the use of means, of reasons which shall carry conviction. Hence, in this gospel as in the others, Jesus himself makes use of means, and thus fulfills this part of his mission. He preaches everywhere, by the well, as well as in the temple. One of his methods was to recognize the holy forces already moving men to repentance and having their existence in the society about him. Neither John nor he came to a people altogether without means of grace, for they came to the Jews, who were God's chosen people and had "the

²¹ Jn. chap. vi.

²² Jn. iii. 8.

²³ Jn. xvi. 8, 9.

adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises," and the "fathers."²⁴ Hence a certain sort of preaching was never thought necessary by either. They never laboriously proved the truth, as something altogether new. They built on truth already known and acknowledged. When Jesus saw the "faith" of the men who brought the paralytic to him and of the paralytic himself, he recognized it and gave at once the greatest of all divine gifts, forgiveness, to the waiting soul; and then—then only—healing to the suffering body.²⁵

Another means employed was the preaching of sin, its nature and its results. Here again he connected with the Old Testament, for the penalty of sin is "death"²⁶ or "darkness,"²⁷ and is heaped

²⁴ Ro. ix. 4, 5.

²⁵ Matt. ix. 2 ff.

²⁶ Ezek. xviii. 4. Comp. Matt. xxi. 41.

²⁷ Matt. xxii. 13; Jn. iii. 19.

with figures designed to intensify dread of it.

But Jesus does not seek simply to deter from sin. He attracts to the good, and that principally by what he is himself.²⁸ He reveals God ; and God as revealed in Jesus is infinitely lovely. Holiness, when understood in the light of the one holy life, the life of Jesus, never fails to attract. Indeed, in the day of its temporal revelation it did attract men, for, as the Jews complained, the world went after him.²⁹

And, finally, Jesus laid down his life for the world, and thus exercised the highest attractive power to lead men to repentance, as well as proved beyond doubt his own unselfish love.³⁰ This was his preaching, and it fulfilled his mission to bring men unto salvation, the salvation of a new life.

²⁸ Comp. the discussion in Chapter VI.

²⁹ Jn. xii. 19.

³⁰ Jn x. 15 ; xv. 13, 14.

But did Jesus teach that a man is saved *because* he does good deeds? Can a man begin a virtuous life, and expect, in accordance with the teachings of Jesus, to be saved—forgiven for the past, blessed in the present with God's favor, and received for all the future beyond this life into heaven—simply on the basis of what he is and does, regardless of any grace of God bringing him to repentance, and of any ground, laid by sacrifice or otherwise, for forgiveness? So some have thought, and have pointed to the fact that in all the first three gospels the condition of forgiveness is simply repentance. It has even been said, regardless of that word "faith," so common in these gospels, that Jesus never presents *himself* there as an object of reliance. It is said that God is always presented as ready to receive the repentant sinner. The parable of the prodigal son is the perfect illustration of the way of salvation. Nothing is said of any condition

on God's part which must be met before there can be forgiveness. This is believed to be a proof that there is no obstacle to forgiveness needing to be put aside by the offering of himself by Jesus. Over against John Baptist's theology³¹ and the propitiatory theology of Paul, they set this as the "theology of Jesus?" Are they right? The question brings us immediately to the following division of Christ's work.

³¹ See Chapter II.

CHAPTER VIII

The Salvation of Redemption and Forgiveness

“The Son of Man came to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Matt. xx. 28.

WE have now arrived at the most important department of our subject. The space which is given to the passion of Jesus in the gospels, nearly one fifth of their entire volume, would be enough to indicate it; and the prominence in the New Testament, as well as in the later usage of the church, of the “cross of Christ” repeats the indication. Among the favorite

names of the Master in the church has ever stood foremost that of "Redeemer."

The text placed at the head of this chapter stands quite isolated from its context. The mother of James and John has been asking for them that they may occupy the chief places of honor in Christ's kingdom. Jesus is explaining in reply that true greatness consists not in empty honors but in service. Even the Son of Man, the King, came to serve. Then he adds, not as a mere additional particular, though the thought takes that grammatical form, but as an explanation of the meaning of his service by the mention of its chief element, "And to give his life a ransom for many." His service consisted preëminently in giving his life a ransom.¹ The statement is positive and comprehensive; but what is meant by the peculiar phrase employed, "give a ransom," is indicated by no explanatory

¹ Comp. Jn. iii. 14-16; x. 18.

remark whatever. Like so many of Jesus' sayings, it is left to the future to interpret. Except as the word "ransom" itself might serve to convey a definite idea to the hearers to whom it was addressed, the utterance must have remained quite enigmatical.

We are left, then, to this source, to the meaning of the word in the language and amid the customs of Israel, and to what further light can be gained from the New Testament at large, for its interpretation.

Old Testament Use

The Greek word here rendered "ransom"² and its etymological equivalents, are employed in the Greek translation of the Old Testament in the sense of *the price paid for the release of a prisoner*. Used in the plural, it is employed to designate the ransom of a female slave,³ of

² λύτρον.

³ Lev. xix. 20.

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the first born,⁴ of one's own life forfeited before the law,⁵ of one's self from slavery,⁶ and of a whole people from captivity.⁷ It has been employed in these cases for a variety of Hebrew words.⁸ But in one of the passages⁹ it is employed also to translate another word that has a peculiar meaning, the word "covering."¹⁰ The same Hebrew is found in Ex. xxx. 12, Num. xxxv. 31, 32, Prov. vi. 35. Now, "to cover" is the word used in the ritual of Leviticus of the atoning efficacy of the sacrifices.¹¹ Sin is "covered over" by legal rites ordained by God, or God himself may cover over sin, i. e., view the

⁴ Num. xviii. 15.

⁵ Ex. xxi. 30.

⁶ Lev. xxv. 51, 53.

⁷ Is. xlv. 13.

⁸ גִּאֲלָה, מַחֲרִיר, פְּדָה, פְּדִיּוֹן.

⁹ Ex. xxi. 30.

¹⁰ כִּפֹּר.

¹¹ Comp. particularly Lev. xvi. 6, 10, 11, 16, 17.

sinner favorably.¹² It lay very near the Hebrew usage, therefore, to employ “covering” in the sense of “propitiation,” and hence its translation, “ransom,” might have taken that meaning. In this sense our text would have to be translated, “give his life a *propitiation* for many.” But in the Old Testament neither the Hebrew word nor its Greek equivalent in the translation known as the “Septuagint” is ever used in this sense. It is the *payment of money* that always occasions the introduction of the word “ransom” there. So far as the influence of the Old Testament goes, it is therefore against the rendering of the term by “propitiation.” But in profane Greek,—in Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Plato, and Lucian,—the word and its cognates are freely used in the sense of “propitiation.”¹³

¹² Comp. Deut. xxi. 8.

¹³ The importance of this point leads me to add a translation of the remarks of Cremer, in his *Bibl-*

New Testament Use

We come, then, to the study of the New Testament use of the word “ransom” with the result that it may mean either “price paid for liberation” or “propitiation,” with the weight of Old Testament usage in favor of the former.

theol. Wörterbuch d. Nt. Gräcität, under the word λύτρον. He says:—

“The use of λύτρον in profane Greek in the sense of propitiation may be seen in the following examples: Æschylus (Choeph. 48) λύτρον αἵματος, in connection with λύνειν, employed of propitiatory rites, e. g. φόνον φόνῳ λύνειν Sophocles (O. R. 100); Euripides (Or. 510); Æschylus, (Choeph. 803 [791]) ἄγετε, τῶν πάλαι πεπραγμένων λύσασθ' αἷμα προσφάτοις δίκαις, ‘the bloodguiltiness of the old deeds atone with new punishment’; Plato (Repub. 2, 364, E) λύσεις δὲ καὶ καθαρμοὶ ἀδικημάτων, of propitiation by ritual and in divine service; Sophocles (El. 447) λυτήρια τοῦ φόνου, means of propitiation; Lucian (Dial. Deor. 4, 2) εἰ δὲ ἐπανάξεις με, ὑπισχνοῦμαί σοι καὶ ἄλλον κριὸν τυθήσεσθαι λύτρα ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ.”

Which of these two does it mean? We decide for the second, and for the following reasons:—

Words are understood according to the connection in which they stand. The word “ever-lasting,” for example, may mean much as it is used of God, or very little, as it is used of a sleepless night. The connection, the context, is largely decisive in determining such a question as this. The immediate context, as already shown, gives us no help as to the meaning of “ransom.” Is there a wider context, is there anything else in the utterances of Jesus, as they have come down to us, which bears on the question and gives us the means of deciding?

The passage, Matt. xxvi. 28,¹⁵—“This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many unto remission of

¹⁵ Parallels are Mk. x. 45 ; Lk. xxii. 20 ; 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25.

sins,"—forms such a context. Jesus is here speaking of the cup which he gives to the disciples in the Last Supper. Taken as it here stands, and especially under the circumstances in which it is uttered, this text is the plainest assertion possible that the blood of Christ is a propitiation, a covering of sins because a sacrifice for them. "*Blood*," "blood of the *covenant*," "shed *unto remission* of sins,"—these are the pivotal words, and they point immediately back to the sealing of the covenant by Moses at Sinai. A Jew, familiar with the Scriptures, or even accustomed to note the ritual of sacrifices still practised in that day in the Temple, could scarcely understand them in any other way. So we should suppose. But we have more than supposition to go on, for we have a whole New Testament book to show how one Jew actually did understand them,—the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the central chapter of his book, the ninth, he

has been drawing out the analogy between Christ's offering and that of the great day of Atonement,¹⁶ and then has recalled at length the sanctification of the covenant by Moses;¹⁷ and he concludes thus: "Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission [under the Mosaic law]. . . . Now hath (Christ) been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."¹⁸ Hence we have "boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus."¹⁹ Thus to every hearer trained under the system of Israel as it existed in the days when Jesus spoke of his blood as the "blood of the covenant," these words had one meaning and but one, the meaning of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that the blood of Jesus was the propitiation for our sins.

Now, the inherent and logical relation

¹⁶ Heb. ix. 11-14.

¹⁷ Verses 18-22.

¹⁸ Verses 22, 26.

¹⁹ Heb. x. 19.

of these ideas, "ransom" and "propitiation," gives us the meaning of our text, "give his life a ransom." If the giving is a price paid only, it need not be a propitiation. But if it is a propitiation, it must be a ransom, since it must set the many free. In the plainer passage it is manifestly a propitiation. This is its central and controlling idea. And hence it is a ransom because a propitiation. The word "ransom" is used here at any rate as *equivalent* to propitiation; and, therefore, since it can bear that meaning directly (as shown above from the profane Greek), we prefer to say it does, and give it the meaning of *propitiation*.

Critical Objections

Attention has been called to the fact that the words, "unto remission of sins," are not found in the parallel passages describing the institution of the Lord's Supper. The inference has been drawn that they are not a genuine portion of the

earliest tradition, but were added by the writer of Matthew in the interest of ritualistic ideas. Jesus, it is also said, never manifests any interest in the ritualistic and institutional elements of religion, and so never could have given utterance to these additional words.

The fact that the words in question are found in but one of the evangelists counts but little against them. If Matthew may be said to have added them, it is equally easy to say that the others may have omitted them, for they add nothing essential to the idea conveyed by the phrase "blood of the covenant," which was always propitiatory. It is equally easy to *say* either, and equally useless. The words stand as an undisputed portion of the text, and can be removed only by the arbitrary methods of a subjective criticism, which has only such value as its originator feels inclined to assign it, and then only for himself. The added argument that Jesus *could* not have said it, is equally valueless.

“Jesus never speaks of institutions and ritual,” they say. “But here is a case,” it is replied, and other cases are to be found when he speaks of the “church”²⁰ and of “baptism.”²¹ “The text is corrupt in all these cases because it would overthrow our proposition,” is the rejoinder. In other words, *the criticism assumes such a knowledge of Jesus apart from the records, that it can dispute the records on the basis of that knowledge.* But one ounce of fact, such as is given by this text, is worth a ton of conjecture. If the criticism is to be allowed any value, it will put itself in better condition before itself and before the world, if it frankly admits that it believes we know nothing indisputably certain about the teaching of Jesus. But then serious men will not continue to busy themselves with the study of so unknown a teacher.

²⁰ Matt. xvi. 18.

²¹ Matt. xxviii, 19.

It may be confidently affirmed, and will meet with no objection from any competent critic of the present day, that on the basis of the Old Testament as we have it, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews was right in his understanding of the meaning of Jesus' blood. The account of the ratification of the covenant of God with Israel is recorded in Ex. xxiv. 4-8. Moses is then reported to have taken blood and sprinkled it upon the altar and then upon the people. Why it was put upon the altar is clear. It was the blood of "burnt-offerings" and "peace-offerings" which had just been offered.²² Now, the blood of such offerings, though not *primarily* propitiatory, was such *secondarily*. If a man was to rejoice before Jehovah, he needed first the forgiveness of his sins, and therefore a propitiatory sacrifice. Hence in Leviticus²³ the ritual act of the transfer

²² Vs. 5.

²³ Lev. i. 4.

of guilt to the victim by the laying on of hands is prescribed in the case of burnt-offerings, and it is verbally added that the offering is "to make *atonement*."²⁴ The same is indicated in reference to the peace-offerings.²⁵ There was no covenant made except with those who by sacrificial atonement had received the divine forgiveness, and thus been brought into fellowship relations with God. This is the fundamental Jewish conception of the whole matter.

The Higher Criticism of the Old Testament has been used by some to invalidate this argument. It has been said that the sacrifices of primitive Israel were not propitiatory in their character; that the propitiatory character, and the use of the word "cover," are late, in fact, post-exilic, additions; and hence, if the blood of Jesus *is* the blood of the covenant, it

²⁴ כִּפֹּר.

²⁵ Lev. iii. 2, 7, 13.

need have no propitiatory character whatever. You must not distort the plain meaning of the early book, Exodus, by interpretations brought from the far later one, Leviticus !

Upon the correctness of the conclusion as to the original meaning of sacrifices among the Israelites and the relative age of the various parts of the Old Testament, we shall here enter no opinion. This is not the place for profound critical questions. But as to the conclusion drawn from the premises to invalidate the text under our present discussion, it is utterly erroneous. Whatever may have been the true historical course of Israel's ritualistic development, it is evident that the compilers of our present Old Testament and the Jews of our Lord's time who read it, interpreted the earlier forms by the later, and saw in them all *one* fundamental significance, and that was the significance of a propitiatory sacrifice. However it had *come*

to the goal, this *was* the goal of the Israelitish development. That is the impression which the Old Testament, taken as one consistent whole, giving one designed impression, and not taken as the mere materials out of which the "true" (and a *different*) impression is to be laboriously constructed, made on its readers at the beginning of the Christian era, and makes on us to-day. Now, *that impression constitutes the environment of our text* ²⁶ in accordance with which it must be understood. Speaking to Jews having such an understanding of the covenant, and its blood of propitiation and sealing, the evangelist Matthew must have expected his text, xxvi. 28, to be understood in that sense. In fact, he must have understood it so himself. What he understood by it and what others understood by it, is to be taken as its meaning, intended by Jesus. Any other interpretation is impossible and incapable of being

²⁶ Comp. chapter I.

sustained, because it makes Jesus talk a language he knew would and must be misunderstood.

The argument from the environment of our text is not yet done. That environment is not simply the Old Testament. It is also, as already explained, the portions of the New Testament in existence when the gospel appeared,²⁷ particularly the Epistles of Paul. Now, no one doubts that Paul held the death of Christ to be a propitiatory sacrifice. He calls Jesus a "propitiation"²⁸ and a "sin-offering,"²⁹ and a "curse."³⁰ These expressions are plain enough; but they are most indubitably confirmed by what one of his school, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, says at so great length when he makes Christ priest and victim, by whose blood,

²⁷ See chapter I.

²⁸ Ro. iii. 25.

²⁹ Ro. viii. 3, though possibly doubtful; not doubtful in 2 Cor. v. 21.

³⁰ Gal. iii. 13.

as the antitype of the sacrifice of the great day of Atonement, we obtain the remission of our sins. Peter but took up the one voice of the rest of the New Testament when he appropriated the words of Isaiah and wrote of Christ's bearing "our sins in his body on the tree . . . by whose stripes ye were healed."³¹

One more passage only remains to be cited, as throwing light on the meaning both of Matt. xx. 28 and of Matt. xxvi. 28, but it is a most important and significant passage. In our Lord's last hours with his disciples, just before he began that great final discourse, "let not your heart be troubled," he said, as related by Luke:³² "For I say unto you that this which is written must be fulfilled in me, And he was reckoned with the transgressors: for that which concerneth me hath fulfillment." This is a quotation by Jesus

³¹ 1 Pet. ii. 24.

³² Lk. xxii. 37.

himself from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, identifying himself with the "Servant of Jehovah" there described, and his own work with that Servant's work. In Isaiah the servant is "reckoned with the transgressors" because he is treated as a transgressor, for "Jehovah laid on him the iniquity of us all," and "he bore the sin of many." Jesus, who knew the meaning of the Old Testament, must have had all this in mind as he identified himself with Isaiah's "Servant;" and he has thus himself again declared plainly that his work was that of bearing our sins, or of being a propitiatory sacrifice.

Thus at the end of Jesus' life, and by himself, we find the same identification of Jesus with the sacrificial lamb of God as John made at the beginning. This is in the "synoptic" Luke. If John Baptist, or the writer of the Fourth Gospel, puts the fifty-third of Isaiah, as a kind of motto, over the beginning of Christ's life, Jesus himself writes it over the

close, as a summary and epitaph. It stamps conclusively the interpretation of the other passages at which we have arrived without its help, as correct. Its final authority can only be removed by the same arbitrary and subjective critical processes which must be employed with Matt. xxvi. 28. We have seen how inconclusive they are. They are the more inconclusive because there can be no doubt that Jesus claimed to be the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. The "Messiah" and the "Servant of Jehovah" were one and the same. Every time he claimed to be Messiah he taught the propitiatory character of his death. A "Messiah" could never be a mere teacher, because Isaiah fifty-three could never be dissociated from the complete Old Testament picture of him, however the Jews might ignore it.

Thus we close our view of the first three gospels. Upon the basis of all this discussion, its several lines of argument

leading to the same result, we conclude that the word "ransom" in Matt. xx. 28 is to be understood of a propitiatory sacrifice which, because it was propitiatory, redeemed the many from death, the penalty of the law.

Did not Jesus omit the Doctrine of Atonement?

The studies which we have been making in the first three gospels to this point have been largely verbal studies, matters of the interpretation of words. We must return now briefly to the objection raised at the close of the last chapter in the interest of a deeper view of Jesus' mission. A certain impatience with verbal arguments is sometimes manifested. Let us not quibble with words, it is said, let us rise to a larger view of the great methods and the profound meaning of Jesus. When he forgives, he does it freely. He never insists upon any atonement or upon any other condi-

tion. He simply calls to repentance. His doctrine is, "Repent and you shall be forgiven." The Publican who cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and the Prodigal Son who exclaimed, "Father I have sinned," and whose father did not permit him even to close his petition, but called for the best robe and the ring,—these are the examples of Jesus' teaching which show he was far above the petty doctrine of an atonement. So, in substance, it is often said.

But a "large" treatment of a subject can never be successful if it neglects the first elements of interpretation. One of these is that a speaker is not compelled to say *everything* pertaining to a subject *every time* he touches it. Is the doctrine of forgiveness upon condition of repentance true? Then Jesus may teach it, without necessarily discussing its ground. Another principle of interpretation is that a parable can be held to teach only the truth designed to be taught, and that it

cannot be quoted in favor of all the possible inferences from its mere language aside from its main intent. Thus, from the parable of the vineyard you cannot infer that the divinely intended business of the Jews was exclusively viticulture ! or from the parable of the mustard seed (a pungent tasting seedlet) that repentance is always a bitter thing !

Now, as to the parable of the Prodigal Son, one thing is intended by Jesus, and but one, viz., to enforce the position that the gospel was provided for "sinners," and that God had a new joy over a repentant soul simply because he had been lost. The joy of the father is the point : all the rest is accessory. Of course, certain other doctrines could not fail to be taught, for they contribute to the main effect of the story, or are essential to it. Thus the fact and misery of sin ; the motives to repentance ; its nature and thorough-going character ; find illustration in the parable : but the readiness of

the father to receive the sinner, and his equal position in the favor and love of the father with any who may not have gone so grievously astray, is the main thing, and nothing not essential to this can be demanded of the teacher as a necessary portion of his story. Until modern preachers, who believe in the atonement, can be held to mention it every time they speak of forgiveness (and what rhetorician could be as foolish as this?), Jesus cannot be said to have been ignorant of the doctrine or to have rejected it because he did not insert it in such instances as this parable.

If anything more were needed to complete the refutation of the "larger" argument, it would be the distinct addition, by this very Luke, of the reference to the propitiatory work of Christ in xxii. 37 already discussed. Not a synoptic but has some reference to this work, though the scope of his book prevents him from enlarging upon it!

The Gospel of John

The detailed and careful examination of the texts made above has been necessary because the teaching of Jesus himself as to his death has been thought by many in recent days to be confined to the first three gospels, and to omit entirely the element of sacrifice as a portion, much more as the chief portion, of its significance. It has been shown, we trust, that the first three gospels do *not* make this omission. We now turn to the Fourth Gospel. It has been generally acknowledged that this gospel gives the central place in Christ's work to his death as a propitiatory sacrifice. We may despatch this portion of our work, therefore, more briefly; but we need to know the grounds which have led to this general admission.

The teachings of Jesus himself in the Gospel of John are not to be sharply separated from the teachings of the evan-

gelist, as has already been explained.³³ Therefore the significant utterance of John the Baptist, recorded in John i. 29, that Jesus was "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,"³⁴ belongs here. Standing, as it does, at the very opening of this gospel, it is as if the Apostle John had put it as the text of all his subsequent teaching as to Jesus' work, as the key by which his later expressions were to be understood. Certain it is that, if the idea of propitiation here presented be taken as a guide, all the subsequent teaching becomes immediately clear. We shall, however, relinquish the advantage given by this use of the text, for the purpose of gaining the independent contribution of other texts to our theme.

The first discourse of Jesus recorded in this gospel opens the discussion. Be-

³³ See chapter I.

³⁴ See chapter II.

ginning with the necessity of regeneration,³⁵ and affirming the competence of the teacher,³⁶ it proceeds to explain the way of entrance to the "kingdom of God" by "believing," and sets forth the object of faith, the crucified Son of Man.³⁷ The verses fourteen, fifteen and sixteen, give an epitome of the entire gospel. God "gave" his Son. This word is explained by x. 18, when "to lay down his life" is said to be the "commandment" of the Father.³⁸ The "giving" thus involves death, and this is the death of "lifting up,"³⁹ or death upon the cross; and this death constitutes Jesus as an object of faith, so that men are to believe in him,⁴⁰ that is, entrust themselves to him in con-

³⁵ Jn. iii. 3.

³⁶ Verses 11-13.

³⁷ Verses 14, 15.

³⁸ Comp. Phil. ii. 8, "obedient unto death."

³⁹ See vs. 14, and comp. xii. 32, 33.

⁴⁰ Vs. 15, or if this be otherwise construed, then 16.

sequence of what he has become by being lifted up. No closer explanation of the meaning is given except by the reference to the serpent, and the point of analogy seems to be merely the element of trust contained in both.⁴¹ Twice later in the gospel the same figure is employed to describe Jesus' death.⁴² In connection with the first, the voluntary character of the death is emphasized by the phrase "I go away,"⁴³ of which the phrase "lifted up the Son of Man" is but the argumentative parallel. He *went* (voluntarily) away, but it was by means of betrayal and crucifixion. In the second, the context, which is the remarkable passage where the coming of the Greeks suggests the world wide character of his mission, brings forward the thought that only when he was lifted up, could his universal work be done. *Then*, and then

⁴¹ See Num. xxi. 9.

⁴² Jn. viii. 28, and xii. 32, 34.

⁴³ Verse 21.

only, could he "draw all men unto himself." Like iii. 16, it thus teaches that *his death constituted him the Saviour*.

The voluntary character of Jesus' death, and its central position in his work, are made the theme of certain passages in the discourse of the Good Shepherd.⁴⁴ He comes that men may have life, and they obtain it by the surrender of his own life, which no man takes from him, but which he lays down of himself,⁴⁵ because of the Father's commandment, and that he may take it again.

This might seem, possibly, to make him nothing but a hero, like the soldier who takes his life in his hand for his country, or, to use Jesus' own figure, like the shepherd who loses his life for his sheep. This impression cannot, however, stand before a closer consideration of the passage, for the central thought is that of *voluntary* surrender. The human

⁴⁴ Jn. x. 10, 11, 17, 18.

⁴⁵ Vs. 18. Comp. xv. 13.

shepherd yields to a violence which he cannot overcome, and has in no sense "power to lay his life down, and power to take it again." Not so Jesus.

But if such an idea were obtainable from the discourse of the Good Shepherd, the discourse of the Bread of Life⁴⁶ would contradict it. Beginning with the figure of bread derived from the illustration of the manna given to Israel in the desert,⁴⁷ Jesus calls himself the true bread. He must be *eaten*, if a man is to have eternal life,⁴⁸ that is, he is himself the object of faith, and a man must trust on what he *is* and what he *does*, if he is to be saved. It is the old doctrine of iii. 14-16. To make this perfectly plain, the figure of bread is soon abandoned, and the "bread" is declared to be his "flesh;" and, if this is not enough, "flesh" is ex-

⁴⁶ Jn. chap. vi.

⁴⁷ Vs. 31-33.

⁴⁸ Vs. 53.

panded to "flesh and blood."⁴⁹ This language is itself sacrificial, and plain enough to us at this day. But to a Jew, accustomed to the sacrificial ritual, and acquainted with the use of the flesh of the victim as food,⁵⁰ the allusion was even plainer. It might yet cause stumbling to the enemies of Jesus, and they might ask, "How *can* this man give us his flesh to eat?"⁵¹ But those who still listened heard a hint of resurrection after death⁵² confirming the meaning of the figure of flesh and blood as referring to a violent death.

What other objective and unprejudiced interpretation these passages would admit than that of a sacrificial and propitiatory death, I do not know. But if there were any doubt, the setting of this element of Jesus' teaching in the gospels

⁴⁹ Vs. 53, 56.

⁵⁰ See Lev. vii. 15, 1 Sam. i. 4.

⁵¹ Vs. 52.

⁵² Vs. 62.

at large would make it perfectly evident. When we remember that his death was accompanied by the effusion of his blood,⁵³ when we recall the institution of the Lord's Supper and its two elements, bread and wine for body and blood, and remember that the death was prophesied at the beginning of the ministry by Jesus, the "offering of the body of Jesus" for the "putting away of the sin" of the world⁵⁴ becomes the one natural meaning of the text. This was certainly the meaning which John gained from it himself, for in his first Epistle he lays repeated emphasis on the *blood*⁵⁵ of Christ, which "cleanseth us from sin;" and bases the fact of Christ's eternal intercession and advocacy for us on the fact that "he is the propitiation for our sins."⁵⁶ It is but a repetition of the pas-

⁵³ Jn. xix. 34.

⁵⁴ Heb. x. 10; ix. 26.

⁵⁵ See i. 7; v. 6.

⁵⁶ I Jn. ii. 2.

sage in the gospel, iii. 16, when we read in the epistle, iv. 10, God "loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

It is, then, plain from these texts, in themselves and in their setting, that Jesus taught, according to John's testimony, the propitiatory character of his death. When, now, employing the motto-text of the Gospel as our guide, we view Jesus from the beginning as the sacrificial "Lamb of God," every possible hesitation must be swept away. In fact, it has been swept away, for the method which modern objectors to a propitiatory sacrifice have with one consent adopted to invalidate the biblical character of the doctrine, is the critical method, which subjects the first three gospels to an arbitrary and subjective analysis, and denies altogether the authenticity and genuineness of the fourth. In the light of that motto-text, it is as this "Lamb" that Jesus is "lifted up,"

and laid on the cross as upon an altar ; as “ Lamb ” he sheds his blood ; ⁵⁷ as a sacrifice he gives his life ; as a sacrifice his flesh and blood become food for the soul as the flesh of the ancient sacrifices was the food of the sacrificers.

Result

The four gospels, then, perfectly agree in presenting the teaching of Jesus as this, that his death was a propitiatory sacrifice. Jesus made, it is true, but brief allusions to this great fact, for the time had not yet come to make it perfectly clear. Even to the disciples the thought of a suffering Messiah would have been a stumbling block, ⁵⁸ as it always remained to the Jews. But in view of the fact, the teaching becomes clearer to us than it could have been to those who heard it ; and *they*, when they had seen the teaching illuminated by the events of Calvary and Olivet, had no further hesitation.

⁵⁷ Comp. 1 Pet. i. 19, 20.

⁵⁸ Comp. Jn. vi. 66.

CHAPTER IX

Salvation at the Last Judgment

“For judgment came I into this world.” Jn. ix. 39.

THE idea of Jesus as judge moves amid verbal paradoxes in the gospels. In Jn. iii. 17, we read that “God sent not his son into the world to judge the world.” Here we read that he “came for judgment.” In viii. 15, “I judge no man;” in v. 22 and 27, “the Father hath given all judgment unto the Son,” “and he gave him authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of man.”

Yet there is no essential difficulty, or real contradiction in the gospel. Jesus does not come to *judge* the world but to *save* it. "Judge" here means condemn, pronounce unfavorable judgment upon. This has been *already done* for the sinful world, which lies, in the omniscience of God, in known guilt and recognized condemnation.¹ In the text prefixed to this chapter, the meaning is still another. Jesus comes to present truth, as the light,² and the actual result of this will be judgment, the making manifest of the fact that those who in their own opinion see, are really blind; and others who know they have no spiritual vision, gain such a vision. But he shall come finally to execute judgment in the full and proper sense of that word,³ when he raises the dead, and they come forth,

¹ This presentation agrees with the use of the word "lost." See chapter IV.

² Vs. 5.

³ Jn. v. 22 ff.

some to life, others to a judgment that is a condemnation.

The Gospel of John, with its constant emphasis on the internal, ethical meaning of the message of Jesus, preferably puts the decisive point in the destiny of every man at the hour of believing or rejecting the good news. Then he "passes into life"⁴ and has no judgment hour before him, or he remains in the state of the judged (and condemned), and "the wrath of God abideth on him."⁵ Were it not for the indications of v. 22 ff ("the Father hath given all judgment unto the Son"), and xii. 48 ("the word that I spake shall judge him in the last day"), it might seem that John did not teach the doctrine of a general judgment. But he is put by these passages in full agreement with the first three gospels, which everywhere

⁴ Jn. v. 24.

⁵ Jn. iii. 18, 36.

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teach a final judgment, of which Jesus Christ is the Judge.⁶

Now, at this judgment Jesus appears for the last time and in the fullest sense as Saviour. Here he pronounces the sentence, separates between the evil and the good,⁷ and receives his true followers, even when they would scarcely arrogate to themselves the title,⁸ into heaven. Thus he completes the work which he began by announcing that the kingdom of heaven was near, by receiving his followers into it and giving them "eternal life."

⁶ Matt. xvi. 27 ; xxv. 31 ff. Mk. viii. 38 ; ix. 1 ; xiii. 26, 27. Lk. xxi. 27, 36.

⁷ Matt. xiii. 30. Mk. iv. 29.

⁸ Matt. xxv. 37.

CHAPTER X

Summary

WE are now prepared, in the briefest manner possible, to review our course and gather together in a single expression the result of our studies.

The mission of our Lord in the world is expressed in one word. He is our Saviour. He came into this world because it was lying in sin and lost ; and he came to save it. That expresses the whole. Whatever he should find necessary to saving the world he would do.

And the ideal which he set before himself as the goal to be attained was nothing less than a saved world, a world where the great governing law of heaven should prevail, a world that was the kingdom of heaven.

In seeking this end he met the various problems as they arose, and solved them one by one. He found the world *miserable*, sick with physical disease, plagued with death ; and he *healed* it, curing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons. This was his work at the lowest point of the distress of the world,—its physical distress. So far forth his healings saved it, put into it something of the triumph over suffering which perfect holiness will finally make perfect.

But beneath suffering lay sin, its cause. He came to dispel the darkness of sin, because it was ignorance, wilful ignorance of truth, and painful ignorance of God, what he is and what his friendship is. As Light, Jesus sought to bring the

knowledge of God to men in such a way as should lead them to love him and surrender themselves to him, and thus, for the first time, *know* him. The gift of this knowledge was the gift of eternal life.

But men do not all move on such a plane that they long, at first, for the knowledge of God. They know, however, that they commit sins, and they may be led to see this and to amend their lives. Thus they will in fact draw near God, and thus the knowledge of personal communion with him will begin. Jesus, accordingly, sought often to gain men through repentance and the beginning of a new life ; and to this effort he brought the most painstaking and unwearied effort. He preached the evil of sin and the beauty of holiness, and began the actual winning of the world to the new life of the kingdom of God. He saved men by winning them to a holy life.

But there was a further task. All this could be done by *living*: now he had to do something which demanded *dying*. God made him the sacrificial Lamb, who was to bear the sins of the world, on whom was to be laid our iniquities, and by whose stripes we were to be healed. Why this was so, the four gospels give no hint. But God gave him the commandment that he should lay down his life; and he laid it down of himself. He gave his flesh and blood to the world for its food. He thereby made *himself* the object of faith. Man needed something more than repentance: he needed forgiveness. He could repent himself: he could not "bear his own sins," or provide for his forgiveness. He needed a Saviour to do this for him, as totally beyond his powers. And Jesus made himself this needed Saviour, when he ascended the cross and bore its solitary burden. When he cried, "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" then he was

bruised and smitten by Jehovah, and when he cried, "It is finished," then he had made atonement for sins and purchased to himself forever by his blood his church, and thus become the Saviour.

And he who saves, shall finally judge—a judgment which shall open the kingdom of heaven to believers, and shall remand those who love darkness rather than light to the outer darkness which they love—and inexpressibly hate and fear.

In a word then Jesus is Saviour, because he is and does everything necessary to our salvation, provides it for us, and leads us unto it.

THE END.

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